



## Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG) Joint Powers Authority Agenda

### STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority  
From: Scott Armstrong, Regional Broadband Coordinator  
Subject: Informational Broadband Update  
Meeting date: October 23, 2024  
Prepared on: October 17, 2024

Attachments: none

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The following report provides information and updates associated with regional broadband activities. I would be happy to discuss these topics or any other broadband-related topics in more detail at your convenience.

### General Broadband News:

The Inyo-Mono Broadband Consortium website (<https://ConnectedEasternSierra.net/>) includes broadband-related information for customers and Internet Service providers in our region. The site includes information and links to a variety of tools, such as grant-specific information, speed tests, service issue reporting, and different broadband maps to view Internet service availability and report discrepancies.

### Grants Information:

#### *FFA & Infrastructure Grant (Construction):*

As of the latest FFA Awards update on October 4, CPUC Last-Mile Federal Funding Account (FFA) project applications have been awarded for projects in 27 Counties so far, including the Golden State Connect Authority applications for project areas in Mono County and the Town of Mammoth Lakes (Convict Lake to McGee Creek, June Lake, and Mammoth and the Lakes Basin in Mono County). Project applications in another 6 Counties have been recommended for award in upcoming CPUC voting meetings.

The remaining grant applications are still being reviewed, with priority for review given to those project areas connecting to the planned State's Middle-Mile Broadband Network (MMBN). The FFA project applications in Inyo County (Aspendell, Starlite, South Lake, Lone Pine, Alabama Hills, and Pearsonville) submitted by Frontier do not connect to the MMBN, but the likelihood that they will be approved is very good, since there were no competing applications and since the total amount of the projects in Inyo County was well within the amount of FFA funding allocated for the County.

The CPUC's [Federal Funding Account Awards and Recommendations](#) page provides a visual depiction of Counties with project applications that have been awarded, but that doesn't mean that all project applications in those Counties have been awarded. There are several project applications that do not connect to the MMBN that have not yet been evaluated, and some project applications overlap, requiring additional evaluation. A full listing of approved FFA and Local Agency Technical Assistance project applications is on the CPUC's [Broadband Portal](#) page.

#### *BEAD (Construction and Digital Equity):*

The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) process for the State of California is completing the CPUC's final determination of any rebuttals to challenges of location eligibility and will be submitting that information to the NTIA in November. Our regional NTIA representative is expecting the State to open the sub-grant application window for BEAD project areas in the spring of 2025.

#### *USDA BTA 2023 (Technical Assistance only, no construction):*

The network-design Projects for Hammil (Mono County) and Furnace Creek (Inyo County) are still in the early stages, with a design contract in development for the Furnace Creek area and an RFP ready to post for the Hammil area.

### **Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative (MMBI)**

The construction in southeastern Inyo to connect Death Valley is still on hold as a result of State Budget cuts, but the network segment remains part of the overall project. The expectation is that when funding is available, it will be allocated for the approximately 2,000 miles of network segments that have been put on hold.

The State's purchase of the California Broadband Cooperative Digital 395 network is expected to close on October 31, 2024, and will include a list of agreements that are still being processed. State is working with Inyo Networks / Onward to develop a Managed Services Agreement to maintain the network, and the California Broadband Cooperative will continue to provide last-mile services to current customers.

#### **BUDGET IMPACTS:**

None.

#### **LEGAL REVIEW:**

Not applicable.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

None, informational only.